Castlemaine Naturalist

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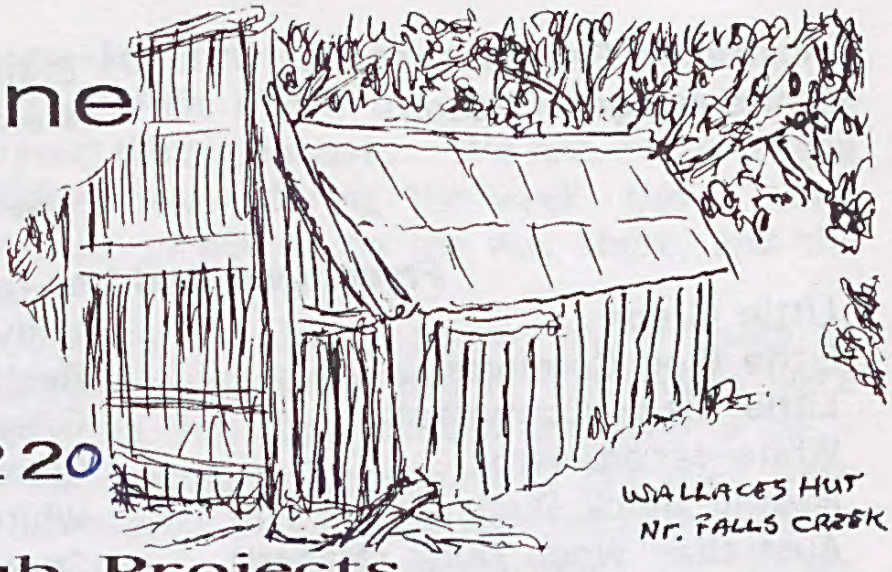

Club Projects

Club members are being asked to keep a diary of firsts, say, of the first flowers on the Cootamundra Wattle, the first Pallid Cuckoo calling, the first Wax in flower, the first frost, etc., over the next two or three years. An out-of-date diary will suit quite well as only dates not days are needed. You will also need to note where the specimen/event was seen/heard. The information wil be collected by the Club each month. This is an outcome of Alan Reid's visit.

Another project under consideration is the setting up of quadrats in different areas to study the changes which occur over a period of time. They would need to be checked at regular intervals, and are a good way to become familiar with the plants of the area, as it is necessary to be able to identify all plants in a quadrat - you wouldn't be expected to be an expert, just ready to ask or to learn to use a Key. Details still have to be worked out, but we would be probably be doing this in small groups.

Sandon Birds, January 1996

Australian Wood Duck
Pacific Black Duck
White-faced Heron
Brown Goshawk
Brown Falcon
Masked Lapwing
Galah
Long-billed Corella
Crimson Rosella
Shining Bronze-cuckoo
Australian Owlet Nightjar (h)
Tawny Frogmouth (h)
Kookaburra
White-throated Treecreeper
Wren
Spotted Pardalote
Striated Pardalote
Weebill
Brown,
Buff-rumped and
Striated Thornbills
Red Wattlebird
Yellow-faced,
Yellow-tufted and
Brown-headed Honeyeaters
Scarlet Robin
Rufous Whistler
Grey Shrike-thrush
Magpie-lark
Grey Fantail
Willie Wagtail
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Australian Magpie
Grey Currawong

Australian Raven
White-winged Chough
Diamond Firetail
Welcome Swallow

Susanna Starr.

Fryerstown Bird List for Jan/Feb

Little Grebe
Little Pied Cormorant
Little Black Cormorant
White-faced Heron
Pacific Black Duck
Australian Wood Duck (Maned)
Brown Goshawk
Wedgetailed Eagle
Brown Falcon
Little Eagle
Whistling Kite
Masked Lapwing
Common Bronzewing
Galah
Long-billed Corella
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Eastern Rosella
Crimson Rosella
Kookaburra
Sacred Kingfisher
Rainbow Bee-eater
Southern Boobook
Barking Owl
Welcome Swallow
Fairy Martin
Fork-tailed Swift
Richards Pipit
Black-faced Cuckoo Skrike
Blackbird
Hooded Robin
Eastern Yellow Robin
Jacky Winter
Crested Shrike-tit
Rufous Whistler
Grey Shrike-thrush
Blue Wren
Willy Wagtail
Restless Flycatcher
Grey Fantail
Clamorous Reed-warbler
White-browed Scrub Wren
Speckled Warbler
Striated,
Brown,
Yellow
Yellow-rumped and
Buff-rumped Thornbills
Southern Whiteface
White-throated Treecreeper
Brown Treecreeper
Red Wattklebird
Yellow-tufted,
White-eared,
Yellow-faced,
White-plumed
Fuscous,
Brown-headed and
New Holland Honeyeaters
Eastern Spinebill
Silvereye
Mistletoe Bird
Spotted Pardalote
Striated Pardalote
Redbrowed Firetail
Goldfinch
Olive-backed Oriole
Magpie-lark
White-winged Chough
Dusky Woodswallow
White-browed Woodswallow
Greu Currawong
Australian Raven

Some regular birds not sighted in Jan/Feb - Scarlet Robin, Golden Whistler, Varied Sitella, White-naped Honeyeater, Weebill.

Ken and Maureen Dredge

Falls Creek in January

Husband Doug and I were at Falls Creek for the last week of the Victorian Nature Group's campout during January. We had every season from Summer sunshine to Winter snow during the week, tho' I must admit the Summer sunshine wasn't as hot as on the way there, and the Winter snow was like soft hail.

We found the Viking Lodge to our liking as we has a room to ourselves with ensuite, and a view over Spion Kopje. The stairs were pretty steep on the first day or so, but they levelled out after a bit - unless we happened to have been walking a fair way, and then they were steeper than ever! We soon discovered that the kitchen area, though on the second floor was at ground level - and below! I think the village would be the steepest of any we have stayed at, and the surrounding area the most varied in scenery. There wasn't the wealth of flowers that was at Kosciusco, but that may have been because of the preceding drought year. I had heard some facinating reports of Falls Creek from previous years and I notice that anyone who has been there is eager to go back again.

The day after we arrived we tried Roper's Lookout for our destination. Most of the way was easy going along the aquaduct, and because of the clear instructions from the previous groups we easily found the patch of Veined Sun Orchids, but as they were the other side of the aquaduct I didn't photograph them, but I did get a couple of photographs of one of the Black Rock Skinks that were so common. I was intrigued by several bird calls which I didn't know, and finally spotted the bird, an Olive Whistler, and all the calls I had been trying to identify were Olive Whistlers, which seemed to be as numerous up there as the Rufous are down here. It's an astonishing volume that issues from such a small bird.

At the lookout the views over the mountains, fading from blue to paler blue, layer on layer gave me much pleasure and I succumbed again and took some more slides of mountains!

Next day we tackled the track from Wallace's hut to Cope's hut along the aquaduct and past the Rover Scout Lodge. We met one of the others at Wallace's hut, all set up to get the perfect photo of the hut - once all the campers were gone and the light was right! It's a very popular camping spot, and no wonder. The area surrounding is certainly lovely with the gnarled Snow Gums and short grass surrounding the hut, and further back lots of different shrubs and flowers.

We walked on down to the aquaduct, crossed over the bridge and continued on to our right. There were dozens of small fish darting for cover every time we looked down into the water and I think they may have been a Galaxia sp., the so called Native Trout. We saw a pair of Grey Currawongs feeding at the side of the track - until they saw us - and a number of Flame Robins, including a young one being fed, and a family of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. We also saw a brilliant male Flame

Robin sitting for quite some time on the top of a small shrub on the side of the path.

We eventually got to Cope's hut and climbed the steep path to look inside, and decided it was a good place for a five minute break. The Snow Gums near the hut were beautiful, I thought, but then, I like Snow Gums, whether they are gnarled and twisted, or a regular, almost Mallee shape, as these were.

Tuesday was a lovely day and we decided to go out on the Mount Nelse track. We left the car well short of the gate, and found when we got there that there were 13 vehicles pulled up on the side of the road! We missed the Bird Orchids which were just near the gate, but saw lots of little birds, mainly female Flame Robins and Pipits, on the track. There were lots of flowers, including the orange, and yellow, Billy Buttons, Rough Daisy, Derwent Speedwell, Alpine Mintbush, senecio ssp, Ivy Goodenia, Yellow Kunzia, Scaley Buttons, a tiny baekea, the brillant magenta Trigger Plant, Tall Rice Flower and Alpine Orites. As we came out of the trees I found the first of the Alpine Podeleipis I'd seen in flower. We took the left hand fork towards Mount Nelse, but didn't attempt to go more than to the top of the next rise, where there were some rocks on the horizon. The view from there was beautiful to the north, and we had seen Alpine Leek Orchids and Carpet Heath with its white flowers and red berries on the way across the Snowgrass. We stayed there for a while and had a cuppa.

On the way back to the car we saw a few Sky Lillies on the bank beside the road, and the meadow on the other side was pink with a pink flowering grass, which was dotted all over with patches of the orange and the yellow Billy Buttons.

Wednesday was foggy and wet, which suited the photographers who wanted to get atmosphere into their photos of Snow Gums and huts, but the chickens like us stayed inside and/or went to Mount Beauty. Even that trip was worthwhile, and the Fern Gullies - it was clear down hill from Falls Creek - looked beautiful after the rain. We saw a male Lyrebird racing along the side of the road looking for a place to dive into the vegetation, and we were told where to look out for Purple Hyacinth Orchids just after Cranky Charlie.

Thursday was still rather foggy, but we decided to head for Faithfull's hut just the same, and the morning cleared to bright fluffy clouds which were racing across the sky. The cold air was causing the Dam to "steam" and we stopped for photos. We missed the track to the hut at first, but soon returned to it, and set off down the hill. There were not many birds to be seen, mainly because of the wind, but we heard several Striated Pardelotes when we went off the track a little to have a look at an old split tree. I think we might have invaded their territory as they stopped again once we'd left the area.

The hut is in a very pleasant setting by Bucketty Plains Creek, and is quite luxurious - for a cattleman's hut - with a kitchen table - laminex

no less - chairs and an armchair, and a huge kerosene fridge. Along the creek were quite large plants of the Alpine Baekea. As we were leaving the hut I spotted an adult and immature Pied Currawong - and the young one was still begging and being fed.

We had our lunch at the picnic spot on Strawberry Hill and 'though the white clouds were becoming grey we still decided to have a look at the Ruined Castle on the way back. It was there that we realized why we are told to always carry waterproof and warm clothing when walking in the mountains. I had my gloves in my pocket and was very glad of them and had to put my hand over my face as it was becoming quite numb. Little flecks of snow were begining to scud with the wind by the time we turned to go back to the car. I made sure I also put scarves in the pack next day.

On the Friday a gale was blowing. We walked along the Langford Gap aqueduct, but not before Doug's hat had been blown off his head into the water and was rescued by an intrepid walker who heaved his big pack off and scrambled down the bank after it. We thanked him and turned back to the car and swapped hats for hoods! We again enjoyed a lovely walk, this time of 12 or 13 kilometers. We went up the Alpine walking track, through a few rather boggy areas and some more lovely Snow Gums, and almost to the Mount Nelse track I found my one and only Prasophylum suttoni. The wind was blowing so much that we settled for a video of it instead of a slide. We took the Marm track back to the aquaduct. There were a number of the brightly coloured Mountain crickets on this track which is really a very pleasant one, and found a very picturesque spot overlooking the valley across to the snow poles of the Kelly's hut track for our lunch. The cloud shadows were racing so fast across the landscape it reminded me of time-lapse photography.

Each evening after the ordered chaos of getting tea we settled down to the real treat of some beautiful photography. On Saturday we were shown some beautiful spots in some of the Malayan National Parks, both on the Malaysian Peninsular and in Sarawak. There were a number of slides of different Pitcher plants, which obviously caught the photographer's eye, and the Orang Utang Rehabilitation area, and different fungi which were his favourite subject.

We were treated to a program of 3D slides, complete with specially imported polaroid glasses. A lot of the shots were of the Perisher campout. The photographer explained how it was done afterwards, but I got lost, being a Naturalist-photographer, not a Photographer-naturalist. I just sat back and ENJOYED! He also showed us one of his audiovisuals, which he had titled "Nature's Ways" using the fade in-fade out technique. He showed us another later in the week.

On the third night we were taken on a delightful trip via a slide program on a guided walking tour of some of the National Parks of Italy and over the Swiss border. There were some magnificent views and

shots of flowers and meadows. It would be "Italy, here I come!" but those paths looked awfully steep.

Rob and Cynthia Watkins of Bendigo F.N.C. had arrived the night before, and on the Wednesday evening took us on the first part of their tour of North America, through Canada and the Western U.S.A. Again magnificent scenery, wonderful animal photos, taken at great risk to life and limb in some places, and a new look at places like the Grand Canyon and Yosemite N.P.. The following night they followed these up with slides of their trip to Alaska where they saw and photographed Grizzlys fishing and had some lovely experiences with Ground Squirrels, which were friendly and curious. One of the favourite sides was the original of their Christmas card that year - the little Ground Squirrel "taking their photo".

We were also taken on a trip to South America which was made in 1972, looking at the beautiful craftwork of the area, and some of the Inca buildings including the incredible Macchu Picchu.

On the last night we were taken on another tour, this time to Central and North West Australia. What a truly beautiful land we live in - places like Ormiston Gorge, King Edward River, the Bungle Bungles, and Yampi Sound. Then the masses of Sturt Desert Pea and pilotus ssp. around Port Hedland, the Snappy Gums and Parakeelya in the Hammersleys.

These camps are always very popular and a credit to those who spend so much time and energy arranging them.

We're looking forward to the next one in two year's time!

Rita Mills.

Observations for February

* Family of three powerful Owls in Peppercorn Trees, near Red Gums, north-west of Maldon. R.M..
* A latrge greed Bristle Fly found in Burnett Rd. P.M.
* Jewelled Spiders in the garden in Thomas St. M.W.
* Red-browed finches nest found near a waterhole on Italian Road, Vaughan, during the February U3A/FNC outing. Also Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. M.O.
* A family of Blue Wrens at Gaulton St. M.O.,
* After the dawn breakfast was over and all was quiet, a pair of Speckled Warblers were found at the spot.
* Bronzewings were seen at Harcourt. B.E. A very tame one seen on the Poverty Gully track - it made no attempt to fly off as they usually do. G.B.
* A koala had been at the Fryerstown cemetary for over a week. C. and C.N. A koala has been on the property at Sandon all month. S.S.
* A kangaroo has been coming into the garden at Little Bendigo. C.M.

* A pair of hares were seen on the Povertly Gully track. G.B.
* Last year at Harcourt there were problems with Musk Lorrikeets attacking the early apples, this year there has been none. G.B.
* There have been regular sightings of Hooded Robins at two different sites, with up to 8 - 10 birds seen.
* Reed Warblers seen at Crocodile Res.
* Musk and Little Lorrikeets fly over but don't stop to feed.
* White-naped Honeyeaters used to be moderately common at Fryerstown, but haven't been seen for 12 months.
* Cuckoos haven't been seen since December.
* Richards Pipits have been sighted at two different sites for the first time. Last 6 reports from K. and M.D.
* A juvenile male Satin Bower Bird in a friend's garden in Myrtleford. R.M.

New Members

Margaret Badminton, Yapeen; Albert Golden, Kyneton; Gunther Leibl, Green Gully; Annmaree McBain, Castlemaine; Patrick Kavenagh and Megan Ballenger. Welcome.

Great Dividing Trail Walks Program

The Club is a member of the Great Dividing Trail, and the Newsetter is available on request.
Walks available until May are-
Fri Mar 1 **Night walk** 1.5 - 2 hours Leader Merv. Kew
This is a repeat of last year's very sucessful torchlight walk. The starting point will be at Tipperary Spring with a picnic Barbeque start. Sausages, bread sauce etc. will be available for a small donation at the start from around 7 pm, with the walk commencing around 8.45- 9pm. We will complete a loop walk ging toward Lake Daylesford and turn around at Twin Bridges. Estimated time of finishing 10 - 10.30pm. The walk follows the very well defined Tipperary Walking Trail. BRING A TORCH WITH FRESH BATTERIES. This is a walk for the kids.

Sun Mar 17 **Beehive Gully** 2-3 hrs Ed Butler leader
A short afternoon loop walk in the Dry Diggings area following the path of the GDT toward Castlemaine from the Hepburn Springs car park over Jacksons Lookout. The Grade is moderate to easy in most parts with a couple of short but very steep sections. There are numerous Gold era relics to be seen along the way as well as a fine view of Hepburn and, later, Mount Franklin.

Fri April 19. Ballarat/Creswick, 4 - 5 hrs, Gail Whyte leader. Ballarat Station Car park.

Sat May 4. Autumn Working Bee, 4 - 6 hrs., Ed Butler leader. 9.30 Daylesford P.O.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

N.B. Excursions leave promptly at times stated.
General Meetings are held at Continuing Education, Templeton Street. .

Fri Mar 8 **Walking in Nepal.** Speaker is Bruce Douglas.
Sat. Mar 9 **Tullaroop Reservoir** Afternoon excursion. Take tea. Time to be decided at the general meeting.
March 8 - 11 **VFNCA camp at Mt Portsea.** See article p. 7 of Castlemaine Naturalist Oct. '95 for program and booking details.
Thurs.Mar 21 **U3A/FNC Birdwatching.** Meet Cont. Ed. car park at 9.30am.
Fri Apr 12. **Introduction to Beetles.**Speaker is Peter Kelly
Sat April 13 **Lanacoorie Res. Birdwatching.**
Fri May 10 **Waders in Siberia** Speaker is Mike Weston.
Sat May 11 **Terrick Terrick** All day excursion.
Fri June 14 **Marilyn Sprague, "Seed collection and propagation", and "Rehabilitation of mined areas".**
Sat June 15 **Falls at Malmsbury** on private property. Leader, B. Maund.
Fri July 12 **Some Birds of the Castlemaine district.** Program by Club members.
Sat Dec. 14. **Discovery walk** from the Shire boundary to Barringhup along the Carisbrook/Baringhup road, (approx 5-6 km).

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Committee: C. Morris (Pres.), G. Broadway (V.P.), M. Willis (Interim Sec.), B. Envall (Treas.), K. Turner (Prog.), R.Mills (P.O. & N/L Ed.), E. Perkins, M. Oliver, B. Maund, J. Hewetson, M. Dredge.

Meetings:-
General - Second Friday every month (except Jan) at **Continuing Education, Templeton St.** at 8 pm.
Business - Held on the 4th Thursday every month (except Dec.) at 38 Campbell Street at 7.30pm. **All Members are invited to attend.**

Subscriptions - 1996
Ordinary Membership: single $14 Family $20
Pensioner/Student: Single $10 Family $16.
Supporting $25
Newsletter posted: Membership + $6

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Castlemaine Field Naturalists' Club Inc.
P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine, 3450.